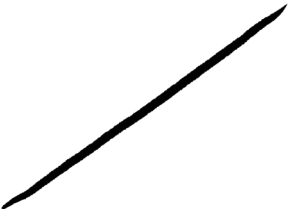


CORPUS CHRISTI CASE (2012)

AN ATTEMPT TO
INSTITUTIONALIZE
FAR RIGHT
CENSORSHIP
AGAINST THEATRE
IN GREECE

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Abstract: Starting from the censorship against the performance of Terence McNally's play, "Corpus Christi", in 2012, which was in fact imposed by far-right's protestors, the article examines the underground and/or overt connections of the neo-Nazi organization "Golden Dawn" with the Greek Church and presents a series of similar imposed censorships from the far-right in Greece. "Corpus Christi" case is differentiated by the previous attacks against artworks, because of the institutional position of "Golden Dawn", at the time, as political party and its attempt to acquire the protagonist role in Greek far-right (which, until then, was owned by the Church), institutionalizing the violent censorship against artworks that didn't fit the "Greek-orthodox" pattern.

Keywords: Golden Dawn, far-right, Church, "Corpus Christi", censorship, protests.

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1. Social context and the rise of Golden Dawn as authentic political representative of the Greek far right's milieu.

During the second decade of the 2000, Greece met an unprecedented economic crisis. The state's emerging inability to serve its economic and credential obligations and the increase of the interest rates of the country's international lending to prohibitive levels inevitably led the 2009's socialistic government to appeal to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). IMF's lending, as in every case of interference, came with a Memorandum of cooperation and understanding with the Greek government, which outlined structural reforms in the country's public administration and, above all, provided for broad spending cuts. Following this Memorandum, and all the memoranda the country needed to surpass the debt crises during the decade, this government, followed by all subsequent governments, made large cuts in salaries and pensions, and also attacked on historically acquired labor and other rights.

Following this economic policy, unemployment rates skyrocketed, welfare benefits collapsed (Papanastasiou and Papatheodorou, 2018: 208ff.) and people who had previously been convinced that the country was forever out of post-war economic poverty and who lived according to a certain way, were found now to owe huge sums on individual and corporate borrowing, impossible to be repaid, as there was general economic hardship: with conservative calculations, the private debt in the country (mainly individual, consumptive and mortgage debts to the banks) almost reached the amount of the public sector's debt, which had also skyrocketed to about 175% to GDP in 2013 (Mah et al, 2014: 7). Even worst, some segments of the population, which relied on government spending and allowances of all kinds to live, found themselves below the poverty threshold: e.g., a phenomenon unknown in Greece until then, mainly due to strong family provision that had shown a remarkable endurance until the dawn of the new millennium and unlike other European countries (Kourachanis, 2018; 70; Papadopoulos and Roumpakis, 2013: 207), hundreds of homeless people appeared on the streets of Athens begging for a few euros to survive (Kourachanis, 2015: 116-118). And perhaps the declination of such support networks, such as family, was sort of indicative of even worse processes happening in society because of the economic crisis: as everywhere, the economic collapse was followed by a series of doubts about and depreciations of social values system and of social mechanisms, which until then had been proved capable of absorbing social tensions (such as the above-mentioned family), as well

as to act like channels of social evolution (like the education system, although until today it ensures the inclusion of most candidates in the public university) and to project some kind of social and political cohesive identity (like the mass media). In other words, Greek society, from an imaginary aggregation of subjects who, supposedly, shared for decades or centuries some common values and visions (as the then recent successful organization of the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens has been conceived) was gradually transformed into a society combined by autonomous individuals, each seeking its own way of survival and, consequently, (political) expression.

It was normal, after 15 years of economic growth (Mavridis, 2018:4), which had been proved fictitious, based on enormous State borrowing and major subsequent spends on behalf of the state in a still state controlled economy, as the Greek one used to be, for people to feel great frustration and, sometimes, anger (Lazaridis, Konsta and Lee, 2013:5) for this unexpected breach of a so far generally functional “social contract” (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou, 2016, p.20). This anger (Fielitz, 2016: 258), which was directed mainly against the politicians and the so-called media, economic and social status-quo, constituting an economic, as well as a crisis of the democratic representation and of the so-far cohesive ideology, was nourished not only by the real imperative needs that had arisen, but also by populist cries that offered easy and inexpensive solutions –and, sometimes, conspiracy theory explanations (Skoulariki, 2018)– to intractable problems. In this context, the political landscape began to be reformulated (something that would be reflected in the upcoming parliamentary elections of 2012), and the inherent state failure (Featherstone, 2011: 211) to act like a contemporary republic, as well as the antecedent corruption and clientelism exercised by the political system (Papakostas, 2001) became more apparent; therefore, the electorate began to move towards a more extreme choice, the most dangerous of which was the strengthening of the far-right, neo-Nazi “Golden Dawn”.

“Golden Dawn” (GD) was a marginal organization, acting like a political party, which had been operating since the 1980s, promoting extreme nationalist positions and not hiding its admiration for National Socialism’s ideology and Hitler himself. Its roots can be found in the good cooperation of the far-right traitorous governments during the Occupation with the German troops. Then, an attempt was made for the first time so that the German occupying forces appear as guarantors of the country’s security, mainly against the communist “threat”; this “danger” which would lead, immediately after the war, not only to a new civil war, but also to the anti-communist hysteria of the country’s post-war political scene until the 1974 restoration of contemporary democracy. Many featured members of this organization were in fact descendants of precisely these docile politicians and their militants,¹ while GD also included admirers of the last far-right dictatorship in Greece (1967-1974), which also, in their eyes, had proclaimed and served

1 Tsoutsoumpis (2018, p. 506) suggests that the contemporary Greek far-right’s roots should be found in the civil war era (1946-1949) and the then formed paramilitary groups, which “played a pivotal role in postwar politics”. Nevertheless, his argument, although supported by other scholars (e.g., Gkotsaridis, 2017), disregards not only studies, which locate the far-right’s ideological origins at the German Occupation 1941-1944 (e.g., Dordanas, 2011), but also the actual origins of these subsequent paramilitary formations from the respective occupational ones.

the nationalist positions, which were considered to be genuine. Until the outbreak of the economic crisis, GD had little involvement in the country's political and social life, mainly for occasional attacks against targets that it deemed that did not fit into its ideal for a pure Greek society, *i.e.*, immigrants (Ellinas, 2015:2). The strengthening of this actually criminal organization which appeared as a political party, the emergence of GD from obscurity was the most shameful of the consequences of the economic crisis in Greece (Ellinas, 2013): promoting easy to hear and understand ideas, such as a supposedly "betrayal" by the traditional political parties, which had led to economic hardship, or declaring an urgent need for the nation's salvation and inventing enemies like the economic immigrants and refugees, who supposedly distorted the Greek-Orthodox character of the country and stole jobs from the Greeks –in other words, "offering plausible solutions to the three sets of crises (economic, political and ideological) that have culminated in an overall crisis of democracy in Greece" (Halikiopoulou and Vasilopoulou, 2015:24)– GD's populist rhetoric (Charalambous and Christoforou, 2018) gained a foothold in the mass media and, after the elections of 2012, a not-so-negligible representation in the country's parliament.

One of the social institutions in which GD and its ideas seemed able to easily penetrate was the official Greek Orthodox Church. The Greek Church is a unique example of state religion institution across Europe. Its leading role against other religions and doctrines derives from Article 3 of the Greek Constitution which, despite the constitutional guarantee of the freedom of religion (Article 13), characterizes the Eastern-Orthodox Church as the "prevailing religion" (Article 3). This constitutional provision is not only referred to the percentage of citizens who follow the orthodox doctrine,² as expressed by the Greek Autocephalous Church, but goes along with various privileges, such as the payment of clergy by the state (its priests are considered civil servants), or the approval of its local bishop on various issues concerning other religions (such as the establishment of a temple of another doctrine).³ In reverse, the state supervises most of the Church's decisions, and even its Charter (which stipulate its function) must have the approval of the state.

Adhering to a fabricated Byzantine past and with a special conception on a fictitious union of church and nation (Sakellariou, 2014, p. 281), the Greek Church has always considered itself –and in contrast to elected politicians– as the eternal guardian of national values and national identity. Its aversion to political structures and politicians themselves did not prevent it, as we mentioned, neither from enjoying any privileges granted to it by the state (often at the expense of religious freedom), nor from constantly claiming a regulatory role in the citizen-politician relations and in the strategic planning of the country: when in 2000 another socialist government tried to remove the indication of religion from a public document, such as ID cards – also a remnant of the German occupation, conceived then in order to easily separate and easily identify the country's Jewish citizens – the Greek Church had demanded with vigorous mobilizations the

2 Most of the scholars of Constitutional Law agree on this rather naive explanation, see for example Tsatsos, 1993.

3 Papastathis Ch. (1994: 32ff.) suggests, without approving, that these privileges, which derive from the Constitution, proclaim the Greek Church as the State Church.

withdrawal of the measure as “anti-orthodox” and “anti-national”. Similarly, the almost blind obedience of part of the flock to its bishop has transformed him (always him)⁴ to a party leader: everyone knew that no member of the Greek parliament, even the most left-wing, could be elected without the support or the tolerance of his/her local diocese. In any case, the role and support of the Greek Church even in the last dictatorial regime remains to be researched and is one of the greatest taboos in Greek political history. It is no surprise, therefore, that many bishops –although the official administration of the Greek church abstains from direct political statements– viewed the rise of GD positively, and indirectly or, in some cases, even directly supported its candidates: GD embodied the whole anachronistic, extreme right-wing context of ideas that the Greek Church always tried to impose or, in any case, would be pleased if it were imposed, in the country’s political and social life. The very convergence of the Greek Church, especially through its para-religious organizations, with the GD would create an explosive political and social blend, also in the field of art and theatre.

2. Corpus Christi Case: the attempt to institutionalize the far-right’s violence against theatre

Those were the days when GD was living its omnipotence: having just elected 21 members on the parliament, it seemed not only invincible, but also that it is meant to play a decisive role in political and social developments. GD has persuaded everyone that it could mobilize an undefined crowd of its members and act, fast and fiery. It was in late October 2012, when a small theatre, at the edges of the Athenian center, where most of theatres reside, announced the forthcoming performance of “Corpus Christi”. “Corpus Christi” was written by Terence McNally in 1997 and from its premiere in USA (Manhattan Theatre Club, 1998), it has faced protests and attempts of censorship, since it presents Jesus and his 12 apostles as a group of gay men living somewhere in contemporary Texas.⁵ In Greece, it was directed by Laertis Vasileiou; there is one detail here that should not matter, but unfortunately it does: Laertis Vasileiou is of Albanian origin, son of Albanian immigrants and as such, it was an easy target for the GD’s bullies. On the night of the premiere, a rowdy crowd of GD’s supporters, along with monks and followers of para-religious organizations, organized a violent protest outside the theatre, harassing the audience and the actors. Protagonists of the episodes were three newly elected (in June) GD’s members of the parliament (MPs). The protests, during which the physical integrity of the spectators and the actors was threatened (some of them were seriously wounded), obviously canceled the premiere, but they also surprised the supporters of freedom of art and speech: some attendees of the protests denounced the attitude of the Greek police, who could not –or did not want to– protect the audience and the crew.

4 The exclusion of women from the Greek Church’s governance –as from most of the so-called ancient churches’ clergy– could be compared with the inherent misogyny of the radical right parties across Europe (Mudde, 2007: 90ff.).

5 For an overview of the censorship attempts against the play, see Houchin (2003: 257-263). For a critical study of Terence McNally’s work, see Wolfe (2014).

The fear for their physical integrity and life on behalf of the performance's contributors was the worst consequence of these protests since the GD's bullies and the crowd openly threatened their life. That night, most of the actors did not sleep at their homes, believing that GD may follow and hurt them. The reaction of the progressive people was thus icy: the next day, some dozens of supporters of the performance gathered outside the theatre, with the help of some MPs from the Left, and with the police, again, just erecting a neutral wall between them and the GD's members. The situation was explosive and, of course, after a few days Hytirio theatre decided to cancel the performance. Nobody can argue that, in this case, we are in front of a real censorship, which was imposed not by a state's decision, but by a crowd and some organizations, which expressed the far-right ideas, and they were willing to use violence to replace the state's institutions and functions.

The director Laertis Vasileiou, the actors, and their various supporters, continued for months to receive threatening messages and to be afraid to walk on the streets of Athens, which, to a large extent –and with the assistance or tolerance of the Police– were controlled by the GD's gangs. In addition, the bishop of Piraeus, famous for the backwardness of his views, took a stand in the controversy, suing the actors of the performance – who were prosecuted! The question of the protests' guidance, which finally ended to the performance's censorship, was crucial: did the Church manage to gather the enraged crowd or did the Church follow Golden Dawn's choices?

The protests on behalf of the Greek Church against works of art that it considered challenged the dogmatic core of the faith or mock the holy faces of Jesus etc. have had a long history: from the time of the so-called “Evangellika” [the incidents around the “Evangelia”, the Gospels] (1901), when the New Testament was translated, at the expense of the then Queen, from the ancient Greek language to the modern one, when bloody incidents occurred in the streets of Athens, the Church or its various ardent supporters, either voluntarily or after instigation, used to turn against any progressive artistic or intellectual movement. One of the most well-known recent cases is the dispute between the local bishop of a border Greek town, Florina, and the famous film director Theodoros Angelopoulos on his film: *To meteoro vima tou pelargou* [*The suspended step of the stork*] (1991). Considering that the script was anti-Christian and anti-Greek, the very dynamic local bishop “banned” the shootings in Florina, and, when the director did not back down, he excommunicated him, along with all the actors and the crew. Certainly, this ecclesiastical punishment would not have really mattered except that, during the filming, some of the faithful people clashed in the streets of the city with supporters of the director, while the church bells rang mournfully and their loudspeakers broadcast military marches, to cancel the shooting. Fortunately, the film was completed and, as expected, participated in international festivals, gaining several awards, but this latest information for the military marches has its significance: the local bishop Augustinos (Kantiotis) was a well-known pro-royal, who had taken his place in 1967, at the request of the dictatorship of the Colonels in the hierarchy of the church (Giannaras, 1992:387); furthermore, he used to organize attacks on artists since the 1950s (Antoniadou, 2000), and one of his first actions as bishop was to demolish some churches in the area (including Florina's Cathedral) invoking stability issues: actually, the demolition was due to the fact that these temples –as it was natural in a

four centuries multicultural area—presented Slavic architectural elements, with the written names of the saints on the church's iconography following the Cyrillic alphabet, something that the far right, with the help of the bishop, could not tolerate.

The protests of the church and para-religious organizations not only multiplied at the end of the 20th century, but competed fiercely with those of the far right, when it could still openly demonstrate its power; that is, after the end of World War II, during the Civil War and until the restoration of democracy in 1974; such a case is known as “the attacks against theatres” which occurred on the 22nd of June 1945: that night, far-right terrorist organizations, founded during the Occupation and continuing to operate after the Germans left the country, attacked theatres in Athens where the protagonists belonged to or favored the country's largest resistance organization, the leftist National Liberation Front (EAM). Leaving the late 80's and the 90's and entering the first years of the new century, most of the attacks on behalf of the Church were no longer directed against films, as was the case against the Martin Scorsese's *Last Temptation* in 1988 – which was based on the book of one of the most famous Greek novelists of the 20th century, Nikos Kazantzakis⁶ –and books, such as the *M'* by Mimis Androulakis, which presented Mary Magdalene and Jesus as a couple⁷, but mostly against exhibitions of art: in the “OUTLOOK International Art Exhibition Athens” in 2003, a work by the Belgian visual artist Thierry de Cordier was withdrawn by decision of the Minister of Culture, after having provoked a storm of reactions on behalf of the Church's authorities, since it depicted a cross and a penis; the then Minister of Culture (of a socialist government) was also a famous professor of Law and, to justify his action, which was essentially censorship, he insisted that “the freedom of art (constitutionally enshrined in Article 13) is restricted by law and by common taste”(!), in fact proclaiming the judge to a critic of art. Fortunately, another institution, the Ombudsman, through its advisory, saved the honor of the Greek justice and administration, suggesting that no work of art can be banned and in case the religious feelings of some could be offended by it, a warning sign is sufficient to prevent these people from watching it. But even this small victory came too late, only one year after, when the exhibition had ended. The case of the video work “National Anthem” by Eva Stefani is almost identical, proving the long-lasting objection of the Church against artworks that its flock would not have known about and would never have watched if the Church had not paid attention.

On the contrary, theatres seem not to belong to the scope of the censorship attacks on behalf of the church, and this, of course, has to do with the performances presented during this era, which excluded provocative topics and spectacles. But with the onslaught

6 It is very interesting that Nikos Kazantzakis also faced the penalty of excommunication from the Greek Church in 1955 for his novels. The permanent embrace of the Church with the state played its role in this case: the hierarchy of Greek Church almost decided to impose this ecclesiastical punishment, but according to the Church's Charter (which is a state's law, as we mentioned above), the punishment had to be approved by the Minister of Education who supervised the Church and who, apparently due to Kazantzakis's international reputation (he was a permanent candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature), simply blocked the whole process. But the legend of his excommunication will be proved long-lasting. For all these, see Nanakis, 2008: 52-56.

7 The most shocking aspect of the case was when enraged believers burned the book outside a bookstore in Thessaloniki, while one of the most embarrassing moments of the Greek justice was the fact that the prosecutor accepted their appeal and banned the book (for about a month).

of the financial crisis and the pressure on theatres, which were now competing against each other to attract a reduced audience, the choices, both in terms of plays and performance, should become bolder. Even so, none would expect that a performance in a theatre of a few seats on the edges of Athens's center would attract such attention; at most, there may be some negative reviews and comments on the play's topic, which would work and vice versa in favor of the performance's publicity, in some permanently moralizing TV broadcasts. The true surprise was that at the Hytirio incidents a whole mechanism seemed to have been mobilized and participated to stop, in other words to censor the performance. And this could not be just the Church's work.

The violence exercised on behalf of GD was serving the organization's main goal, which was to institutionalize its cultural hegemony before, in its fantasy, it delivers to establish its political one. In this context, whatever did not belong to its cultural pattern should be persecuted, exterminated, and prohibited no matter the way. This pattern GD included not only everything considered as "Greek", but also the connection of Greece with the Eastern Orthodox Church, just as the official church and other institutions, such as the educational system, did for so long. GD, an in fact a mystic organization, like all Nazi ones, did not really care about the Christian faith and, in any case, not a single thing from its action could remind the actual message of the Gospel, as only some enlightened bishops had pointed out. In addition, some believed that GD was a real "cult", since it copied ancient Greeks' rituals (or to be more accurate, it performed some rituals believed to belong to the ancient Greek rite), swearing that it served the ancient Greek spirit, its strength and bravery, rejecting the self-indulgence of the Byzantine era, of which the church is meant to have featured as guardian. But, in the Church, GD found a ready-made message—that of the existence of "national faith"—and a ready-made identity characteristic, the belonging to the orthodox fold, and it adopted and evolved both to acquire "the one of us status" (Papastathis, 2015:245): from now on, whatever could offend the Church, supposedly also offended the nation, and, consequently, GD had every right to attack to it, as it happened at the "Corpus Christi" case.

3. The Penal Code Articles against "malicious blasphemy"

Thus, the Church, on the field of art and censor, had found an unexpected ally, GD, brutal and violent, to impose its will and views, and the undertaking of para-religious contracting against art by the Golden Dawn could create situations of a different magnitude and order (Christopoulos, 2013: 13). But the Church had already another stable ally: the Greek Penal Code. The article no. 198 stipulated that anyone who curses God or shows disrespect for the divine is punished with imprisonment, while similar punishments (Article no. 199) awaited anyone who curses the Orthodox Church or any other religion tolerated in Greece. Of course, the last words in Article no. 199 were added, so that it would not be characterized as completely unconstitutional, since it is obvious that the purpose of the legislator was to punish those who do not accept, criticize, and ridicule the Greek Church. These offenses, in fact, of the so-called "malicious blasphemy" are prosecuted *ex officio* by the prosecutor. Both these articles have served to censor and ban several works of art, such as the mentioned above film *The Last Temptation* or the

comic book *The Life of Jesus* by the Austrian Gerhard Haderer (in 2003), although many academics have pointed out that, in a liberal democracy, they are at least problematic: Kostaras (2005: 428) had expressed the view that “God does not need a prosecutor”, since, in the end, the legally protected right was something intangible, like God himself (who, in any case and following the theological aspect, could be considered as “capable” to “protect” himself), while Tsakyrakis (2005: 79) had aptly pointed out that these two articles not only constitute aggravating provisions in relation to freedom of political speech (which, on the contrary, was not “protected” by corresponding provisions), but also, they actually protected the feelings of the religious segments of society—which were considered more important than the freedom of speech—from a non-specialized “attack” against them.

Much more important than the legal and constitutional problems of the above articles, was the fact that, essentially, they appointed the judge as a critic of works of art. Indeed, one of the permanent excuses for the existence of these articles was that the works in question were, in fact, “rubbish” and not true artworks (which, in any case, are protected by the Article no. 13 of the Greek Constitution).⁸ If everyone was honest, the supposedly offensive artworks (in our case, the performance “Corpus Christi”) would not have reached the “audience” of the believers, so they could not have been offended; in other words, we are in front of an authoritarian, paternalistic attitude, which tends to “protect” those who never have asked for protection (the actual audience). But the state, by acknowledging the existence of a god and incorporating it into the legal order through the above-mentioned articles of the Penal Code, has turned his existence into a state value (this is, beyond the individual beliefs), which is worthy of “protection” (Mallios and Papapantoleon, 2013: 21).

Until the “Corpus Christi case”, all the citizens-believers who appealed to the “protection” of Articles no. 198 and no. 199 of the Penal Code belonged to para-religious organizations and the official Church supported them only indirectly. On the contrary, now, apart from the presence and, possibly, patronage of GD on the protests outside Hytirio theatre, another qualitative difference occurred: the lawsuit to initiate criminal proceedings was submitted by the bishop of Piraeus, Serafeim, accompanied by the Golden Dawn MPs who had led the incidents outside the theatre. The uproar from this blatant embrace of hierarchs and the Nazi organization—where it was not at all clear who was leading and who was following—was such, that they forced the official Church to declare that it was not on its behalf that the lawsuit was submitted,⁹ and the bishop of Piraeus himself claimed that he met the MPs at the police station by chance! Even believers reacted to this attempt to promote GD as an official interlocutor and, why not,

8 In any case, the more advanced interpretations of the freedom of art enshrined in the Constitution recognize as a work of art whatever its creator recognizes as such (see Hrysogonos, 2006: 328).

9 In Greek Church, every bishop is responsible for his province and his actions, without needing any approval from anyone. Even the bishop of Athens, who is considered the archbishop of the Greek Church, in fact has no jurisdiction over the other dioceses and merely presides over the Synod. The Synod of the Bishops, on the other hand, being the supreme governing body of the Church, can punish a bishop etc., but this is so rare that even in cases where bishops have been convicted for embezzlement of enormous sums, the synod seemed completely reluctant to impose ecclesiastical penalties or dismissal.

protector, exponent and guide of the Church (Zouboulakis, 2013: 37 & 52). The attempt to present this bishop as someone acting on his own, cannot, however, obscure the fact that not only other bishops had also spoken positively about the Golden Dawn (and in contrast to the constant non-expression of party positions from the Church), but also individual monks, priests, and theologians had voted for it in the previous elections, often exercising indirect and direct propaganda to their flock. In any case, in order not to forget the invisible or not so hidden connections of the Greek Church with the extreme far right, the same bishop, in a delirium, had expressed strong anti-Semitic positions (and then, against Islam), which in another liberal country would have led, without a doubt, to his resignation. Here, on the contrary, the archbishop himself, but also many MPs from parties formulating a so-called “cordon sanitaire” against GD, instead of keeping some distance, had participated with him in official rituals (Zouboulakis, 2013: 87-88). The stance of the prosecutor in the “Corpus Christi” case was also scandalous: apparently, he had not watched the performance, having only read the play, but instead of applying the “law” against the author, he turned against the actors and contributors of the theatre (Tsimitakis, 2013:28), proving the strong tentacles of the far-right in every institution.

4. A transient failure?

When asked what he feared the most, the British Prime Minister Harold MacMillan answered: “the facts, always the facts”, apparently meaning an indefinite turn of fortune, beyond the human actions which could have predicted it. The beginning of the end for GD is a little different, but the essence is the same: its leadership and its members, incapable of realizing the limits of their “omnipotence”, they even went so far as to cold-bloodedly kill in 2013, a musician, Pavlos Fyssas, who had developed anti-Nazi activities. The subsequent arrests of members of the GD leadership were as shocking as the assassination itself, since, for the first time, acting MPs were handcuffed in live streaming. The huge legal process that followed, confirmed the criminal nature of the organization, and resulted in the conviction of all its members in 2020. Fortunately, GD, in the last elections of 2019, evaporated, failing to elect any MP;¹⁰ although at the dual elections of 2015, its MPs, the directorate in other words of the criminal organization, had been re-elected to the Greek parliament.

The struggle for the freedom of art and theatre against the censorship of both the Church and the far-right, as expressed by the Golden Dawn, won another battle: in 2019, in a revision of the Penal Code, the articles no.198 and no.199 were finally abolished and the Church thus lost its institutional pillar to attack artworks. Do these two “victories” mean that the Church has changed its mind? Probably not ... The arrogance of the Church in terms of its divine and national mission also arises from its supposedly “eternal” character: whatever happens, in the minds of its bishops, any “mistake” (which never officially recognized, only silenced), like the confluence with Golden Dawn, is

10 Georgiadou (2019:8) suggests that the return to a “two-party hegemony” after the 2019 elections also signifies the end of the financial crisis in Greece.

a misdemeanor compared with the eternity of the church during the centuries. So, if we would like not to leave the above question unanswered –his is whether GD or the Church were the leading power behind the incidents of the “Corpus Christi” case – we should suppose that both believed they were. The turn of the story, GD’s imprisonment, proves that the actual leading force of the Greek far-right is the Church since it has the ability to always survive. Nevertheless, it might be useful, as Zoumboulakis (2013: 29) writes, for the Greek church to finally accept (as other European churches did) the historical secularization of the contemporary states. The latest attempt to institutionalize censorship, the *Corpus Christi* case was a game of fire played with the criminal Golden Dawn; fortunately, the provisions of the democratic regime, only for once, seemed to function and, along with democracy, they also saved the Church itself.

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